

Elizabeth

AUGUSTA;

OR, THE

FEMALE TRAVELLERS.

A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

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MDCCLXXXVII.



A NOVEL

VOL. II.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR WILLIAM LANE,

LEADENHALL-STREET,

MDCCCXXXIII.

AUGUSTA.

CHAPTER XX.

**MR. VILLARS CONTINUES HIS
ADDRESSES TO MISS WOOD-
VILLE — SHE ACCIDENTALLY
MEETS WITH UNEXPECTED IN-
TELLIGENCE.**

IN the mean time, the courtship
between Mr. Villars and me con-
tinued with great fervour on his side.

But though he daily gained my affections, I felt a despondency within me, that seemed to forebode that my hopes of happiness with that gentleman, however apparently well founded, would vanish away. I saw no reason for indulging such apprehensions, but they visited me in my gayest hours abroad, and no less infested me in my private meditations at home.

Viewing such fears as the groundless productions of mere fancifulness, I strove all I could to suppress them; But they recurred so invincibly, that they began at last to alarm me in a very serious manner, as if they had been the admonitions of my good genius forewarning me not to depend with



with too much security on the agreeable prospect before me.

These ideas I am convinced, proceeded from no other source than the disappointment I had met with in the affair of Mr. Stanley. But though I was perfectly cured of my passion for that gentleman, yet I was not recovered from the effects of that disappointment. It had rendered me mistrustful of every man, and had in a manner steeled my mind against all the rhetoric of love. My heart was become like a fortress inaccessible but one way; Reason alone had any power over me: unless Love made his approaches under its protection,

tion, I remained insensible and unmoved.

It was from the conviction not only of the sincerest attachment of Mr. Villars, but the propriety of it, that I suffered him to gain admittance to my heart. He had toiled with so much assiduity in order to win it, and had given me so many proofs of his constancy, that I had no right to call it in question. I began therefore at last to get the better of my apprehensions that his courtship would end unprosperously, and to recover from the inward dejection which they had occasioned.

He

He now became more pressing and earnest in his solicitations; alledging that I could frame no valid excuse for delaying an union, to which no objections could be made on any pretence. My brother was equally warm in advising me to come to a determination in his favour. At this however I was not in the least surprized, as the connexion he promised himself with Miss Villars depended in a manner on that between Mr. Villars and me.

Nor was Miss Brenton less desirous to see my happiness so firmly rivetted, as she kindly expressed it, that no malice of Fortune should be able to undo it. Neither did I feel any dis-

inclination to yield to these various advisers, especially as they were seconded by my own predilection in favour of a gentleman who was the admiration of all who knew him, and did me the honour of preferring me to any of my sex.

Mrs. Brenton, who had favoured his addresses to me from their first commencement, was particularly urgent in her entreaties, that I would not defer the acceptance of his hand any longer, lest Fortune in one of her capricious moods might recal the favour she intended me. I could not but listen with much deference to a gentlewoman, whose prudence and penetration had been of the highest service

service to me on many essential occasions, and whose fondness for me I had experienced from my childhood.

It was therefore concluded, that I should consent to give my hand to Mr. Villars; and that he should for this purpose wait upon his uncle, and obtain his consent; which was indeed a mere matter of form; as the high opinion which this nobleman entertained of his nephew, was a sufficient inducement to approve of every part of his conduct.

While this business was in agitation, Miss Brenton accompanying me one morning to Tavistock-street,

to make some purchases preparatory to my nuptials, I heard a lady who was going out of the shop which we were entering, telling another, that she was to pay a visit that afternoon to Mrs. Stanley, who was just arrived from Jamaica.

I made no doubt this was the lady for the sake of whose fortune Mr. Stanley had thought proper to forsake me.

Having frequently seen at this shop the lady to whom the other had spoken, we had contracted a sort of acquaintance; upon the strength of which I took the freedom to ask her whether she knew the lady lately come

come from Jamaica, as a relation of mine there had married a gentleman of that name. She answered in the affirmative, and by the discourse which passed between us, I found that the gentleman himself and his lady were to be next day of a party, that was going to a celebrated auction room, to view some capital pictures.

This intelligence excited a variety of sensations within me: but I may honestly say that curiosity was the predominant one. I could not help feeling some indignation at being forsaken for another; but as reason and time had overcome the grief I had suffered on that occasion, no traces of

of my former passion remained to disturb me, and I was positive that the sight of Mr. Stanley would create no other sentiment than that of contempt.

Armed with this idea, which Miss Brenton was charmed to see me assume with so much fortitude, we went together next morning to the auction room. After waiting a few minutes, I saw the gentlewoman to whom I had spoken the preceding day, enter the room with two other ladies and a gentleman. I immediately accosted her, and after customary civilities, enquired which of the ladies was Mrs. Stanley, and whether

ther her husband would be there as she had mentioned.

She answered by telling me that the gentleman who came with them was Mr. Stanley. This reply threw me into the utmost perplexity. I considered him over and over; but though he was a well-looking man, there was no shadow of resemblance between him and my Mr. Stanley. I turned to Miss Brenton, who seemed struck with no less astonishment than myself, and taking her by the hand—My dear Nancy, said I, what are we to think of this?

I was seized immediately with such an agitation, that unable to support myself,

myself, I was obliged to sit down upon a bench. The lady to whom I had spoken, perceived it, and seated herself on the one side of me, as Miss Brenton did on the other.

It was with no small difficulty that I was prevented from fainting. Mr. Stanley and the two gentlewomen seeing their companion employed in assisting me, very politely joined her in doing me the same kind office.

—When I had somewhat recovered my spirits, the lady to whom I had first spoken, looking at me with much tenderness, said—Madam, unless I be much deceived, your emotions denote something very extraordinary; had I
the

the happiness of being better acquainted with you, I should certainly have the curiosity of asking whence they proceed.

I shook my head, and looked at Miss Brenton, as if to ask her advice: she understood me, and whispering to the lady, they withdrew to a corner of the room; where I could observe by the countenance of this latter, that the discourse between them interested her greatly on my account. I had always felt much prepossession in her favour: she was young, very handsome, and extremely genteel; but what pleased me most, was an air of good sense and good nature that

that reigned visibly in all her features.

They presently returned, when to my utter amazement, Miss Brenton informed me, that Mr. Stanley, the gentleman whom I had just seen, was the cousin of my Mr. Stanley, with whom he was intimately acquainted.— This is no place to converse upon a subject of this nature, added the young lady; but if you will both honour me with your company at my house, I will gladly impart what I know of this matter, which is not a little.

Such

Such unexpected news discomposed my spirits afresh to such a degree, that I was obliged to leave the room; after assuring the young lady however, that I would together with Miss Brenton, wait upon her that afternoon.

When we were seated in our carriage, to which Mr. Stanley conducted us with much respect, Miss Brenton exclaimed—What ways does Fortune contrive to tease and perplex us! Who would have thought, that after putting you to the trouble of overcoming an attachment rooted in you from your infancy, you should now be told that all your sufferings proceeded
from

from a mistake? I could almost wish that the adventure of this day was but a dream. All things were so settled to your heart's content—a former unhappy passion forgot—a most agreeable partner for life secured—splendor, opulence, titles, all that occupies human wishes prepared for your enjoyment—and now behold them all precipitated at once into annihilation.

I heard her with profound silence, and allowed her to say as much as she thought proper on the strange casualty that had so totally deranged the system I was pursuing. When she had

had ceased—Nancy, said I, the only reason I have to complain is the uncertainty of my situation. The magnificent prospect I had before me did not in the least dazzle my imagination; nor am I grieved at the loss of that, so much as at the grief which a most worthy gentleman will experience on this discovery. It pains me to the soul to think how deeply Mr. Villars will be affected by it. The supposition of Mr. Stanley's infidelity was the foundation of that strong and sincere attachment with which Mr. Villars has honoured me; and he now will find that supposition to be false, and that he cannot of course

course be justified in continuing to address me any longer in the character of a lover; he can only remain my friend—my dear dear friend.

I pronounced these last words with a vehemence that shook my whole frame. It was like the taking of my last leave of the love I had long borne him, and which I now felt was greater than I had ever thought it. His fine person, his noble qualities, his constancy, his perpetual attention to my welfare, all rushed at once upon my mind, and overpowered me in such a manner, that reclining my head

head on Miss Brenton's bosom, I burst into a flood of tears.

She soothed my affliction with all the kind language and endearments of a faithful sympathising friend. She bid me recollect her own situation, torn from a man who had won her affections by a behaviour, the nobleness and generosity of which I had been witness of, and whom she found herself obliged to resign for ever. My situation, she observed, was far from being so mortifying. Honour indeed forbade that I should encourage Mr. Villars; nor was it from his own character to be expected that he would look upon himself as any longer authorized to continue his courtship.

Still

Still however, if I had lost him, I had recovered one whom, if she judged right, was far dearer to my heart; one who, if I had not recovered him at this juncture, must have been worse than lost, as had the intended union between Mr. Villars and me taken place before the truth was known, the knowledge of it after that event, would have rendered my life a scene of misery.

This reflection, which we both dwelt upon with equal attention, kept us in discourse till we came in sight of our house; from whence we saw Mr. Villars's carriage departing. We were both glad of this circumstance, as I was not most certainly sufficiently prepared

pared to encounter his presence at this moment.

Mrs. Brenton received us both with evident marks of the satisfaction she had received in the company of the visitor who had just left her.—My dear niece, said she, embracing me most tenderly, your happiness is now complete. Mr. Villars has been here to inform me of his uncle's consent to the match, and that you are immediately to be introduced to him, as his nephew's intended bride.

My heart was too full to make a proper reply. I sat down, leaning on my elbow against a table, and pulling out my handkerchief. Mrs. Brenton

stood still, her eyes fixed upon me with amazement.—What, says she, another adventure!—Oh! my dear madam, said Miss Brenton, an adventure indeed!

We continued all three silent during some minutes. Mrs. Brenton at last, taking me by the hand.—Child, said she, what can be the meaning of this? it exceeds all that has yet happened.—It does indeed, I replied, and you will be no less surprized than I was, when you hear the story we have to tell.

Miss Brenton proceeded to inform her mother of what the young lady had told her, and that she had much
more

more to say to us upon the subject, when we called upon her; which we both had the intention of doing that afternoon, in consequence of the lady's particular invitation for that purpose.

The astonishment my aunt was in at what she heard was inexpressible. The first words she spoke were exactly a repetition of what I had said concerning Mr. Villars. I assured her that such precisely were the first sentiments I had felt upon this very unexpected occasion; and that I rejoiced in a similitude of character that did me so much credit.

She was not a little pleased at the respectfulness of my expression. After

pondering a moment or two—This, said she, is now become, from a business of infinite pleasure to me, an affair of no less perplexity. You are two enchanting girls; but I am unspeakably puzzled how to dispose of you both. Your destiny ought to be happy at last, for you both pay dear for it.

Dinner was soon over; my stomach was lost in the impatience to learn what so nearly concerned me. My aunt and cousin were hardly less desirous than myself to be apprized of the particulars of the whole story. As soon therefore as we thought it time to wait upon the lady, we hurried thither with all speed.

We

We alighted at a very fine house in the neighbourhood of Berkley-square, and were ushered into a magnificent dining-room, where we found our acquaintance alone. She told us very politely, that expecting us on a business wherein we might choose no other company but her own, her aunt had left her to transact it by herself; but would nevertheless be happy to see us both, whenever we pleased to honour her with a visit.

After this polite reception, she entered upon the business in question.—Madam, said she, addressing herself to me, had it been my happiness to have been sooner acquainted with you, I should ere now have communicated

what you are so desirous to know. The name of Miss Woodville has been some time familiar to me; but I little imagined it would fall to my lot, to give her the first tidings of a gentleman for whom she seems so greatly interested.

It is now about three months since, Mr. James Stanley, whom you saw this morning, arrived from Jamaica with his lady. They married two years ago, and your friend was present at their nuptials. He might, had he been inclined, have connected himself very advantageously. A wealthy planter, whose estate lay contiguous to their's, had an only daughter just returned from England, whither she had been
sent

sent in her infancy for education. She was a most accomplished young lady. Being often at the house of Mr. James Stanley, your friend without seeking it, made a conquest of her heart. She had so many good qualities, that, independent of her vast fortune, she was herself a treasure. Mr. James Stanley, who was totally unapprized that his cousin's inclinations were already pre-engaged, was almost incensed at him for the indifference he shewed for so lovely a young creature. After much expostulation with him he learned at last the cause of his neglecting not only that, but every other lady. But this eclaircissement, though satisfactory to him, did not remove the surprize of his cousin's

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other

other acquaintance, who universally blamed him for his passing by so many opportunities, as they called them, of making his fortune at once, without any further toil.

In the mean time he was promoted to the command of an armed vessel, in which he made several rich prizes; but engaging a French ship of superior force, he had the misfortune, after a severe action, in which he was wounded, to be taken and carried to a French island; where he long remained before he was entirely recovered from his wound.

On his return to Jamaica, he was again preferred to a command of the
same

same nature as before, and was no less successful. He was next sent to cruize on the Spanish main, in order to gain intelligence of the motion of the Spaniards, who were reputed to harbour hostile designs against the English.

Since his departure on that errand, which happened in the course of last year, it was reported at Jamaica that he had fallen in with, and taken some Dutch ships richly laden with French property; but had been obliged to carry them into a neutral port to prevent their being re-taken. At the time of Mr. James Stanley's sailing for England the same news had been

confirmed, and his cousin was every day expected at Jamaica with his prizes.

I need not, madam, enlarge upon the many excellent qualifications of a gentleman who has the honour of being so well known to your family. I will only say that Mr. Stanley holds him in the highest estimation, and has often declared that his talents and abilities of every kind rendered him the admiration of all who knew him, and were capable of judging of his worth; and that among our sex especially, he knew that no man could presume to rival him; possessing in an eminent degree, those endowments that tend equally to command our esteem,

esteem, and to captivate our affections.

Having given you this account of a gentleman who I presume stands foremost in your favour, let me assure you madam, that we all sincerely rejoice that he repays it with so invincible an attachment. Mr. Stanley has often since his arrival in England, wished for an opportunity of seeing a lady, of whom his cousin gave him a description, the truth of which he could not doubt from the character of the giver. This morning afforded him that much-desired opportunity; and he now most earnestly intreats you will confer upon him the additional happiness of becoming ac-

quainted with you; in which request, my dear madam, I beg you will be firmly persuaded that mine, and that of the two ladies who saw you this morning, is most heartily included.

The affectionate treatment I met with from this young lady penetrated me with the liveliest gratitude. I thanked her in the most cordial manner for the readiness she had shewn to oblige me, and begged that she would from this day honour me with that friendship which she so obligingly requested on my part.

CHAPTER XXI.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE FORE-
GOING INTELLIGENCE.

THERE are persons whose congeniality of character is such, that they need only to see each other to form immediately the strictest intimacy. This had been the case between Miss Brenton and me, and happened again upon this occasion. We all three saw into each other as it were
by

by instinct, and united at once into a coalition of friendship, if I may so term it, that never was dissolved, or suffered any diminution.

We were so delighted with each other's company, that it was long after tea before Miss Brenton and I thought of retiring. We did not part however without engaging her to spend the ensuing afternoon with us.

In our return home we were taken up with devising how to break this matter to Mr. Villars. As we both entertained the highest respect for him, every method was proposed consistent with that idea, which our joint imaginations could suggest. No art, no deception

deception appeared allowable with a gentleman of his character, and we determined accordingly that none should be used with him.

After giving Mrs. Brenton an account of the conversation we had with Miss Longmore (the name of the lady we had visited), we all three renewed the consultation in what manner to proceed respecting Mr. Villars. But though I may without vanity say, that we none of us were wanting in fertility of fancy, no expedient offered itself for the furtherance of our purpose, that seemed so conducive to answer it with propriety, as the plain and simple truth.

To

To this therefore we resolved to adhere, and had made up our minds accordingly; when, early next morning, before we had seated ourselves for breakfast, Miss Longmore waited upon us with her aunt's compliments, desiring that if we were not engaged, we would, together with Mrs. Brenton, favour her with our company to dinner, where we should meet Mr. James Stanley, who was very impatient to be introduced to me, for reasons which he was sure my aunt would fully approve.

The cordiality that prompted this invitation, and the agreeableness with which it was delivered, were equally pleasing

pleasing to my aunt, who after accepting it, detained the fair messenger at breakfast. I took this opportunity to lay my situation with regard to Mr. Villars before Miss Longmore, and to ask her advice. She coincided with our's, adding only that the representation of so disagreeable a truth would come with more propriety from the mouth of Mr. James Stanley than of any other person, as that gentleman could corroborate by his own testimony any circumstance that it might be necessary to assert touching his cousin.

Our reception at Mrs. Longmore's was friendly and hospitable in the most flattering degree, and our introduction

to

to Mr. James Stanley was accompanied with circumstances no less pleasing. He had long wished, he politely said, to converse with a lady, whom a gentleman of such uncommon merit and discernment as his cousin, had selected for the object of so inviolable an attachment as that which he had preserved in the midst of so many temptations to relinquish it.

Mr. James Stanley was rather a personable than a handsome man. He had formerly been an officer, but sold out. His aspect, though commanding, was full of benignity, and his manners were very engaging. He had long been the intimate friend of his lady's former husband, who had requested

quested him on his death-bed to marry her. He was turned of fifty, and she was little less. She was of a sprightly, chearful disposition, very beneficent and kind-hearted, and always ready to serve her friends.

She took particular notice of me, and told me with much archness, that from her ignorance of my many merits, she had often acted the part of an enemy; frequent had been her attempts to seduce my lover from me, through the allurements that are so powerful with most Europeans who visit the West Indies—those of rich heiresses; but that to her great surprize, and the disappointment of many, he had

exhi-

exhibited an example of constancy, which was the more remarked, as his circumstances were at that time not affluent, and his mistress at some thousand miles distance. She concluded by assuring me that her intentions were to make me the most ample reparation.

The day was spent with great festivity; but though I felt unspeakable joy at the recovery of my dear Stanley, yet it was visibly clouded by the idea of what my no less fond lover, my almost as dear Mr. Villars must endure at parting with me. This idea occupied me the whole day; and affected me so strongly, that my colour

colour went and came every moment, and I often spoke incoherently.

My two young friends, Miss Brenton and Miss Longmore, perceiving my perturbation, took me aside to a harpsichord, on which they both played with great skilfulness and grace. Music has charms, as the poets tell us, and as experience often shews, to quell the tempest of the human passions: but mine were of the musing, melancholy kind; which, as they run in an even steady stream, are for that reason the most difficult to turn from their course.

While I listened with seeming placidity to the melodious strains proceeding

ceeding from the delicate touches of my fair friends, I recollected with what pleasure Mr. Villars would sit by me, while I entertained him on this, his favourite instrument; and represented to my imagination his future feelings, when he should hear it played upon by others, and recall that circumstance to his mind. This, and other reflections of the same tendency, produced so terrible a conflict in my thoughts between love and pity, that I absolutely wished that I had never known either my first or my second lover; my compassion for the last rendering me as miserable as my attachment had done for the first.

Mr.

Mr. James Stanley, to whom my aunt had related the particulars of my situation respecting Mr. Villars, was a man of too much experience and humanity not to sympathize with me. He took me by the hand with paternal fondness, assured me that he shared my anxiety, at the same time that he honoured me for it, advising me however, from motives of prudence, not to give way to a grief, which I must be conscious would only be productive of wretchedness to both parties in proportion as it was indulged.

Though I received his admonitions with due deference, yet I was persuaded
that

that time alone would bring about that internal peace, which, as it depends upon circumstances of which we have not the command, is too much under their controul to be regulated by our own will. Resignation to one's present fate, and a patient hope of a better to come, I have always experimentally found the most effectual remedy for evils that are violent and unexpected. Reasoning avails little in such cases, and it is wiser perhaps to yield in some degree to the depression that accompanies them, than to oppose it. Resistance is not exerted without undergoing much more trouble and fatigue of mind than would arise from a quiet submission.

On

On our return home, which was not till late, we found my brother in high spirits. He had been some days out of town on business relating to one of our estates; and having been very successful, was greatly pleased at the good account he was able to give to Mr. Villars of our circumstances. It was my brother's intention to divide all that had been left by our parents equally between him and me; though had I received but a third, I should have had no reason to be discontented.

We did not think fit to acquaint my brother with what had happened, till he had enjoyed his night's rest.

Next morning, as soon as breakfast was over—My dear nephew, said Mrs. Brenton, taking him by the hand, prepare for such a change of things as will require the full use of your reason. Augusta, continued she, faltering—Augusta cannot think any longer of Mr. Villars.

Mr. Villars! my brother exclaimed:—Is it possible that Mr. Villars should have done any thing to render him unworthy of my sister! Sure, Augusta, addressing himself to me, he has not been guilty of misbehaviour.—Oh no, said I, of that my dear Mr. Villars is incapable. But I was born for the strangest vicissitudes.

Remain-

Remaining silent, and too much affected to proceed, Mrs. Brenton resumed the thread of her discourse.— It is become impossible, said she, for a match to take place between my niece and Mr. Villars. The report of Mr. Stanley's marriage in Jamaica is false.

These words struck my brother to the soul. As they involved a meaning of which his penetration saw the full extent, they made such an impression upon him, that he was sometime unable to speak. Turning to me at last, with a pale countenance and a faint voice—Though I perceive, said he, that my loss is certain, I shall

have the comfort of seeing you happy.

The kindness of his first thought on this trying occasion, endeared him to me more than I can express. My tears were the only reply I could give him. But Mrs. Brenton, whose presence of mind never left her, immediately said—Should Miss Villars be so weak as to forsake you, there are others not inferior to her either in fortune or merit.

The drift of this expression was perfectly understood by all present. But no more was said upon the subject, as our attention was principally

pally employed upon what would prove the result of the interview, which Mr. James Stanley was to have with Mr. Villars that morning, and of which he had promised to give my aunt an account as soon as it was over.

While we waited his coming, Miss Brenton gave my brother a circumstantial account of what Miss Longmore had related concerning Mr. Charles Stanley. Though convinced how much he was to suffer in consequence of this discovery, he nobly rejoiced that it had been made in such good time, well foreseeing what misery must have been my portion,

tion, had it been delayed a few days longer.

It was noon before Mr. James Stanley waited upon us. He came in with a very composed and serene countenance; from which I inferred that he was not displeased with the issue of his errand. After my aunt had introduced my brother to him, he seated himself, and gave us the following narrative.

When I was arrived at Mr. Villars's, and had sent in my name, the servant who opened the door not returning so soon as I expected, I looked out of my carriage towards the dining-room

room windows, from whence I had heard a loud and angry voice proceed. I was not mistaken, as I found it was Mr. Villars himself, who had directed that I should be shewn into the parlour, where he would attend me in a few minutes.

He came down to me shortly after, with a firm and resolute countenance, as if he had expected my design had been of an hostile nature. Looking at me stedfastly, the moment he perceived me—Sir, said he with some surprize, you are not the person I thought to find here, though you bear his name.

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No,

No, Sir, I said; I am not the Mr. Stanley I believe you allude to, but his cousin, and have taken the liberty to wait upon you in his behalf, upon a business, which, from the respectableness of your character, I flatter myself you will not blame me for undertaking.

His features now cleared up, and he very politely desired I would walk up stairs; where, being seated, I proceeded in this manner:

What I have to communicate must, I am conscious, prove, on your first hearing it, the occasion of some pain; and I am sorry for that reason to be the instru-

instrument of such communication: but when I reflect that it will prevent much misery, I am persuaded that you will in the end think yourself essentially obliged to me for having pointed out the means of avoiding it.

I am informed, Sir, that you are paying your addresses to a young lady who has been long engaged to my cousin. I absolve you entirely from any impropriety in this affair, as it has been reported that he had connected himself with another lady at Jamaica. This unhappy report originated merely from the similitude of our name, I being the person concerned in that transaction. Had my

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cousin

cousin been of a volatile unsettled disposition, he might have married very highly to his advantage; but the fidelity which he preserved for the lady in question, was an insuperable obstacle to the many offers and solicitations, which, to my knowledge, were laid before him by people of the first fortune and consequence.

Such being the case, I leave it to your own generosity to decide, whether he has not an evident claim to the lady's affections: not that it is in any wise meant that she should not remain perfectly free to dispose of herself according to her own discretion; but permit me to assure you, Sir, that the moment this matter came
to

to her knowledge, which is only two days ago, she deemed herself no longer at liberty to admit of any addressees. It is at her own request that I have assumed the freedom of waiting upon you, to lay her sincerest thanks before you for the partiality you have favoured her with, and for the very distinguished honour you intended her, assuring you that she must ever retain the highest sense of gratitude for the many marks of consideration conferred upon her by a gentleman so universally respected, and whom the world esteems still more for the excellence of his character, than the exaltedness of his rank.

He listened to me with great attention; but with such indications of grief as deeply affected me. — Sir, I continued, be persuaded that I sincerely share in your affliction: but if such a circumstance can afford you any consolation, let me assure you, that no person expresses more concern upon your account than the lady who has been honoured with your predilection. I cannot find words to do sufficient justice to her sensibility on this perplexing occasion.

When I had finished, Mr. Villars, after some moments silence, spoke in the following terms: — I shall always consider the acceptance of my addresses

dress on the part of Miss Woodville, as the truest honour I ever received from the sex, as she is one of those women whose approbation of a man is sufficient to give importance and dignity to his character. Were it for this consideration alone, the short period of time during which I was favoured with her countenance will always appear the most honourable part of my life: it has raised me in the estimation of myself, and procured me the advantageous opinion of the discerning part of mankind. These are benefits which will ever inspire me with the most tender and grateful sentiments.

I was

I was charmed with the nobleness of his ideas, and extremely pleased that he received the disagreeable message I brought him, with so much temper. I then related to him the accident that introduced me to Miss Woodville, and brought about the discovery of the mistake relating to Mr. Charles Stanley. I took the further liberty of reflecting how fatal it must have proved, had it not been discovered in this unexpected manner.

He coincided with me in this reflection; of which he assured me that he felt the full propriety.—I am not, said he, so blinded by passion, as not to perceive how unhappy Miss Woodville

ville must have been, when she came to know that Mr. Stanley's infidelity was a fiction produced by an erroneous report. I hardly can tell whose unhappiness would have been greatest. To possess all of a woman but her affections, is a situation which to a man of the least delicacy must appear insupportable.

After some pause—Tell Miss Woodville, said he, that though I resign her love, yet I cannot part with her friendship; nor, should any accident deprive her of a gentleman so deserving of her attachment, will I forget to put in a claim for the former:

Much

Much more passed between us on this subject; and it was with the greatest satisfaction I found, that notwithstanding the pain he visibly endured, he was resolved to bear it with resignation.

While Mr. Stanley was giving this account of the interview with Mr. Villars, I underwent the severest feelings that compassion can excite in a female bosom. No mean partiality for my first love did I suffer to interpose in his favour to the prejudice of my second. I beheld the merits of the last in their fullest lustre. Nothing but that natural predilection which a first attachment creates, and
which

which can only be effaced by ill-usage, preponderated against the second.

It now remained to be decided, in what manner this separation between Mr. Villars and me would operate respecting my brother. His anxiety had deprived him of every comfort; and though from the reservedness of his disposition he said little, it was easy to perceive how much it preyed upon him.

Miss Villars, though of a soft engaging disposition, had not that firmness which enables a woman to adhere to her own will, when she thinks it consistent with propriety. She was not only

only governed by her brother, but thought herself, as it were, bound to form no other connexions but those in which he bore a part. Influenced by this motive, she had readily encouraged the addresses of a gentleman whose sister she considered as her brother's intended wife: but when she saw that connexion frustrated, she no longer was willing to permit the continuance of my brother's assiduities.

Disappointed in those expectations of felicity he had indulged, his mind received a shock which, notwithstanding his natural good sense, it was not able to support. As he had not ventured rashly, but chosen with circum-

cumspection, the object of his choice was the dearer to him. Excepting that deficiency of steadiness which prevented Miss Villars from being resolute in her determinations in favour of a lover, and which nothing but such an occasion as the present could have brought to light, she possessed every qualification that was desirable in a woman; chearful, witty, and very insinuating in her conversation, obliging, generous, and uncommonly good natured in her behaviour.

The loss of so valuable a companion for life, was not viewed with patience by one who had fixed his affections upon her with so much sincerity as my brother. Being the first time of his

his experiencing the soft passion, it had taken the firmer hold of him, and his native modesty conspired to render it the more deep and violent.

Mrs. Brenton, who loved him as a mother, did all in her power to alleviate his affliction. Though she participated it with great sincerity, she could not help looking upon the cause of it with complacency; as she made no doubt that when his passion was cured, she should find no difficulty in prevailing upon her daughter to encourage an application from him.

But the wound which Miss Villars had made was too recent, and the image of Mr. Chabott too strong, to allow

allow either my brother, or Miss Bren-
son, to think of another connexion at
the present.

In the mean time, Mr. Villars, we
were told, had taken the resolution to
retire into the country, and remain
single until he saw the issue of the
long courtship that had subsisted be-
tween Mr. Stanley and me. This
measure was an additional proof of
the immoveable regard he still cherished
for me, and contributed greatly to
lengthen the duration of the un-
feigned grief I suffered upon his ac-
count.

Before

Before his retreat he wrote me a very kind and moving letter, describing the situation of his mind in the most forcible and pathetic terms. He vowed in the most solemn manner that nothing but the arrival in England of Mr. Stanley, and his actually marrying me, would put an end to the course of life he was determined to pursue. However distant that event might prove, he would wait for it with patience. This, he said, was a determination with which my delicacy could not be offended. It was an homage which a woman of my extraordinary merit was entitled to and a justice which he owed to his own character.

In conformity to the contents of this letter, he left London, whither he resolved never to come but to visit his uncle, or to transact necessary business. His time in the country was employed in reading and study, and in such exercises as were requisite for the preservation of his health. He saw no company, but such as he could not avoid, and absolutely refused all invitations abroad, unless he was indispensably bound to accept of them.

So rigorous an abstinence from all the gaieties to which his rank and fortune were such powerful incitements, could not fail to render him
an

an object of particular attention to all the people of fashion in his neighbourhood. But when the cause of his retreat became known, as it could not indeed be long concealed, he was assailed on every quarter: the men of pleasure made him the constant subject of their raillery, and the unmarried ladies sought every opportunity of dazzling him with their charms. But their efforts to decoy him from his solitude were fruitless; he persisted in the plan of living he had framed, in spite of all temptations and importunities.

CHAPTER XXII.

WHAT HAPPENED TO MR. STANLEY WHILE HE WAS ABROAD.

WHILE Mr. Villars was leading this reclusive life, a gentleman arrived from Jamaica who had been his school-fellow; but not having the same prospects before him, had about ten years before embarked for the West Indies, in order to seek his fortune in that part of the world.

Being of an enterprising disposition, he had forwarded himself upon every occasion; and had through dint of vigilance, and a resolute determination to seize the first opportunity of extricating himself from dependance, met with an opulent widow, whom, though twice his age, he had persuaded to marry him. Under pretence of visiting his relations he left her, and came over to England with an intention to enjoy all the pleasures which his present affluence could procure, and secretly resolved never to return to his old widow.

Among the intimacies he had contracted at Jamaica, Mr. Stanley was the gentleman who stood highest in his

his esteem. He had often expostulated with him on the resolution he had taken, never to swerve from his fidelity to his mistress; who living in another quarter of the globe, was liable to so many attempts on the part of men, that it was highly imprudent to rely upon her perseverance in his favour; especially as she was in the bloom of youth and beauty, and heiress to a large fortune.

These arguments were wholly lost upon Mr. Stanley. He continued steadfast in his loyalty to me; in defiance not only of this, but of various other acquaintance, who having bettered themselves, according to the usual phrase, by matrimony, earnestly

endeavoured to prevail upon him to follow their example. In answer to their admonitions he would sometimes tell them jocosely, that the lady who kept possession of his heart in England, would never resign it, unless he made a demand of it in person; which he intended to do, as soon as his dividend of the prizes he had made upon the enemy would enable him to defray the charges of his voyage home.

As he had been very fortunate in his several cruizes among the French Islands, he began upon his return to Jamaica from his expedition to the Spanish main, to entertain thoughts of revisiting his native country. Mr.
Grantham,

Grantham, the gentleman above mentioned, proposing at this juncture to do the same, they agreed to return in company.

While they were making preparations to this intent, a man of war arrived at Jamaica, one of the lieutenants of which was a relation of Mr. Villars, and much in the good graces of his uncle; to whose interest he partly owed his promotion. As he visited frequently at this nobleman's house, and possessed the friendship of his nephew, he could not fail being acquainted with his predilection for me.

At the time this gentleman sailed from England, the courtship between Mr. Villars and me had made such a progress, that we were both considered as betrothed to each other. Arriving at Jamaica, he waited upon Mr. Grantham, to whom he delivered a letter from Mr. Villars, recommending him to his notice and civilities.

Mr. Grantham, who had always kept up a correspondence with his school-fellow, for whom he professed the highest regard, behaved with great friendship and hospitality to his relation the lieutenant. By this gentleman he was apprized that Mr. Villars was on the point of being married

ried to a lady of great merit, beauty, and fortune, who had long remained single on account of an attachment to an officer in the navy, who had been some years on the Jamaica station; but upon hearing that he had connected himself in matrimony with a lady in this island, she also had been brought to consent to a marriage with Mr. Villars.

This conversation happening while Mr. Stanley was at Mr. Grantham's house, he enquired of him whether he was acquainted with the officer in question; adding that the intelligence was of such a nature, that he was surprized it should not have reached him before. Mr. Villars's relation,

who was present, replied to this question, by saying the gentleman's name is Stanley.

Mr. Stanley was not a little confused at hearing his name mentioned in this manner.—What! said Mr. Grantham, have you stolen a marriage upon us after all your pretences to constancy?—I have not indeed, answered Mr. Stanley; but I greatly fear that my cousin's marriage has been imputed to me.—Then, said Mr. Grantham, I fear you will pay dearly for bearing his name. He accompanied these words with an information of what he had just heard; upon which Mr. Stanley exclaimed—Should the lady's name who is courted by Mr. Villars,

be

be Woodville, then indeed I can no longer doubt of my misfortune. I am extremely sorry, said Mr. Villars's relation, to inform you, that is the very lady.

Notwithstanding Mr. Stanley was endued with a strength of mind superior to all difficulties and dangers, this blow was aimed at too tender a part not to affect him deeply. Though he bore it with manliness, it preyed upon him so forcibly, that his health was impaired; and his friends and well-wishers, who were numerous, felt much alarm and disquietude upon his account during some time.

Reason and necessity having at length gradually operated a cure, the motive for his returning to England subsisting no longer, he now resolved to resume the duties of his profession. As he had been remarkably successful in it, he thought the wisest course he could pursue, was to remain upon the profitable station he was in to the end of the war.

His friend Mr. Grantham, who had been obliged to put off his voyage to England on account of some affairs intervening that related to his plantations, became more importunate than ever with Mr. Stanley, in urging him

him to enter into some of the very advantageous wedlocks that had so frequently offered themselves to his acceptance. He strongly remonstrated on the impropriety of living a bachelor, when no reason could any longer be alledged for adopting such a plan; and when so many arguments pleaded against it. After a world of entreaties and admonitions, he betroughe himself of a scheme which he imagined, not without reason, would prove the most likely to succeed.

Among the young ladies whose fortunes were not their sole recommendation, was that one of whom Miss Longmore made mention in her narrative to Miss Brenton and me. She

was still unmarried, and had, it was thought, continued in that state from the indifference she had contracted for all other men, through the partiality she had long cherished for Mr. Stanley. He had himself more than once declared that if love and honour did not bind him to a lady in England, he knew of none he should prefer to Miss Richardson, the young lady's name in question.

It happened that Mrs. Grantham was the aunt of Miss Richardson. Through the medium of this relationship, Mr. Grantham was become the guardian of this young lady, whose father was lately dead. Being an only child, she was left heiress to an ample

ample patrimony, and was of course an object of pursuit among all the fortune-hunters in the island. But having from her infancy lived in England, of which her father was a native, and after losing him, having no tie to keep her from the connexions she had formed in a country of which she was excessively fond, she had opened her mind upon that subject to Mr. Grantham, and desired him to procure a passage home for her by the first convenient opportunity.

This gentleman, whose friendship for Mr. Stanley was very warm and active, formed instantly the determination of sending home his fair ward under the care of his friend; fully persuaded she

was

was so lovely, that her charms would prove irresistible, and that the only rival who had hitherto stood in her way, being now removed, she would infallibly make a conquest of her protector.

Full of this idea, he waited impatiently the return of Mr. Stanley from a cruise which proved the most profitable he had ever made. He had not however escaped entirely free from the consequences of war, having in the engagement with the last prize which he had taken, received a wound, which, though not dangerous, kept him a good while confined. But this confinement was no small furtherance to Mr. Grantham's intentions. Miss

Richard-

Richardson's attention to Mr. Stanley upon this occasion was so kind and assiduous, that he found himself almost unawares, greatly interested in favour of that young lady.

His friend Mr. Grantham, who perceived this growing inclination, took care to afford it every encouragement. Having no relation living, and been a long time intimate with Mr. Stanley, his affection for him was that of a brother, and he consulted his interest as much as his own. Nothing therefore could have given him more concern, than to have suffered his rich and beautiful ward to have fallen into the hands of any other man.

Mr.

Mr. Stanley had been so prosperous, that his friend insisted he should no longer expose himself to danger for the mere end of adding to his wealth; and that both of them being possessed of sufficient affluence, they ought in reason to covet no more, and to make it their business to secure the enjoyment of it in the land of their nativity.

This determination being agreed upon between them, Mr. Grantham acquainted Mr. Stanley that his ward Miss Richardson was extremely desirous of returning to England as soon as an opportunity offered: that his own affairs requiring his stay some months longer

longer in Jamaica, he could not discharge the duty he owed to his late friend Mr. Richardson more satisfactorily to himself, than by intrusting his daughter to the care of one upon whose honour and integrity he could place the firmest reliance; for which reason he requested him to take that young lady under his protection, in order to remit her safe home into the hands of her friends.

This was too flattering a request to be denied. Had Mr. Grantham pressed Mr. Stanley to go a step further, and to have offered his hand to Miss Richardson, it can hardly be doubted she would have accepted it, as her partiality to that gentleman was well known:

known: but Mr. Grantham was too well acquainted with the peculiar turn of his friend, to precipitate matters. Mr. Stanley, though highly prepossessed in favour of this young lady, was of a character that would not perhaps have approved of a connexion which might have seemed too hastily formed.

But though he did not refuse the lovely trust committed to him by his friend, his delicacy provided every requisite for the safety of her character. The ship in which she was to take her passage, had a very respectable family on board, to whom she was distantly related. It consisted of an elderly gentleman, his wife, her sister,

ister, and his two daughters. In such company her reputation had nothing to apprehend.

Some days before the period appointed for the ship's departure, Mr. Stanley was waited upon by a gentleman, who told him that the late Mr. Richardson had given him permission to pay his addresses to his daughter, in consequence of which he had in the conversations she had had acquired him with, conceived so violent a passion for her, that life would become a burden to him, were he deprived of the hopes of obtaining her. Hearing therefore that she was about to leave the island in his company, he could consider him in no other

other light than that of a favoured rival. To this he would not tamely submit, and was come to decide with him in the manner customary among gentlemen, who should preserve his title to the lady.

Mr. Stanley was extremely surprized at so strange and unexpected a challenge. His reply was, that he should be very unworthy of the honour conferred upon him by the lady's committing herself to his care, were he to suffer an improper intrusion upon her. That as her desire was to go over to England, thither he was bound to see her safe. If the gentleman thought proper to follow her, he could not hinder it: but that he did not think
himself

himself obliged to comply with such an unreasonable and ridiculous requisition as that which was now made him.

The gentleman (who was of a very irascible disposition) was highly exasperated at these last words. He expressed his resentment in such harsh terms, that Mr. Stanley was so provoked as to strike him. The gentleman upon this, drawing his sword, Mr. Stanley did the same. A fray ensued, in which the latter, though he received the first wound, ran his antagonist through his sword arm, and disabled him.

Mr.

Mr. Stanley was again confined for a time by this wound; which, though not attended with danger, yet being in his thigh, constrained him to use but little motion. Miss Richardson's anxiety and care of him upon this occasion, was the more constant and tender, as she was the innocent cause of his misfortune.

This accident however having happened entirely upon her account, it was no longer doubted that a marriage was agreed upon by both parties. Mr. Villars's relation wrote him a circumstantial account of all that he knew, and had heard concerning Mr. Stanley; in which this last incident was particularly specified.

CHAP.

CHAPTER XXIII.

RENEWAL OF MR. VILLARS'S

ADDRESSES TO MISS WOODVILLE.

IN consequence of this information, Mr. Villars hurried up to London, and waited upon Mr. James Stanley, to whom he shewed that part of the letter from his relation which related to Mr. Charles Stanley, with his earnest entreaties, that as he had formerly brought him that message from

Miss

Miss Woodville, which had occasioned their separation, he would now lay before her that intelligence which he flattered himself might prove the means of their future re-union.

Mr. James Stanley, who had been informed of the solitary life to which Mr. Villars had betaken himself in the country, and had not seen him since the interview which has been mentioned, was greatly surprized at his unexpected visit, and still more at the motive which occasioned it.

He read the letter concerning his cousin with infinite surprize. Mr. Villars prevailed upon him to take a copy of it, that he might deliver the intel-

intelligence it contained with the clearest precision, and convince me by ocular evidence of its reality.

Mr. Stanley could not refuse a request which was urged with the warmest solicitations by a gentleman of rank whom he justly respected, and which was not altogether without propriety. He waited upon Mrs. Brenton that very afternoon, and acquainted her with the contents of the letter from Jamaica to Mr. Villars, and with what haste that gentleman had come to town to shew it to him, that he might communicate it to me as soon as possible.

As neither Miss Brenton nor I were at home, my aunt was of opinion that we should not be apprized of this affair till next morning, lest it may deprive us of our repose, which we would heed the more, as we were to spend the evening at Miss Longmore's with a select party, which it was expected would keep us late. But through the loquacity of a servant, we learned as soon as we came home, that Mr. James Stanley had been at our house, and had a long conference with Mrs. Brenton, who seemed uncommonly thoughtful all the residue of the day, and had gone to bed sooner than usual.

Miss Brenton's suspicions, as well as mine, were, that an offer which had been hinted to Mrs. Brenton respecting her daughter, had been renewed. It came from an acquaintance of Mr. James Stanley, a young gentleman of considerable estate and still greater expectations. He had seen Miss Brenton at Mrs. Longmore's, and was so struck with her person and behaviour, that he became from that moment her passionate admirer.

We lay awake a great part of the night, weighing his merits and qualifications with much strictness and nicety. He certainly had many valu-

able recommendations. He was comely, genteel, perfectly well bred, spoke sensibly, and withal was very modest.—Very true, said Miss Brenton; but has he the noble aspect and deportment either of Tavannes or Chabort?

When those, I replied, whom we loved, are dead, or separated from us for ever, Wisdom bids us to let their names rest in silence. We are in England, my dear Nancy; we shall probably have English husbands, if ever we have any; nor is it prudent for us to wish for any others. I will not depreciate the worth of the two gentlemen you have named: their hearts

hearts were good, and their minds were great; but we were not sufficiently acquainted with them, to judge of their domestic virtues; and upon these principally depends the happiness of a married life. Give my country a hero; but give me the man who makes my home comfortable.

Augusta, said Miss Brenton, you forget that he whom destiny seems to have marked for your husband, is just that heroic character to which you would seem so indifferent. His whole life has hitherto been spent abroad on a rude element, which is not improperly thought to communicate some

of it's nature to those who dwell much upon it.

Her remark struck me silent at first; but I presently replied, that exceptions were found in all cases; and that men of the highest spirit in the most active scenes of life, were often of the most gentle and peaceable disposition under their own roof.

After some further dissertations on the qualifications necessary to make a good husband, we resigned ourselves to rest, with my hearty wishes to Miss Brenton, that she might next morning be saluted with the news of an admirer

mirer equally calculated to shine in public scenes, and to make private life a paradise.

Notwithstanding it was late when we went to bed, we rose more early than it was customary with us; so greatly were we agitated by the curiosity of knowing what the purport of Mr. Stanley's visit could be. But on entering the parlour, Mrs. Brenton, who sat expecting us, cried out as soon as she saw us—Adventure upon adventure!—I laughingly replied—For which of us is the tale?—For you, my dear, said she, very gravely. The seriousness of her look alarmed me exceedingly; and I was the more surprised,

F 4

prized, as I thought myself out of the question. She would say nothing however till breakfast was over; but as she had spoiled my stomach, I had soon done, and requested her to keep me no longer in suspense.—My dear niece, said she, you were surely born for endless trials. The vicissitudes that have befallen you are absolutely romantic. One day destroys the business of the preceding, and the next renews it. Your lot is to live in perpetual uncertainty.

Though her words were not explicit, I partly conjectured their meaning. I turned pale, and asked her with a quivering lip, whether any disa-

disagreeable news was come from Jamaica. — Yes, my dear Augusta, said she, very disagreeable; but it is natural that mistake should produce mistake. Then turning to her daughter—Nancy, said she, learn from what has happened to your cousin, to beware of distant courtships.

She then remained silent, biting her lips, and knitting her brows, with other indications of displeasure and vexation. As all this however gave me but a confused notion of what I was to expect, I collected courage enough to beg she would let me know the worst; as after what she had said,

— F 5

it could hardly be worse than I conjectured.

Putting her hand into her pocket, she then delivered me the copy which Mr. James Stanley had taken of the letter written to Mr. Villars by his relation in Jamaica. I took it with a trembling hand, and read it with an aching heart.—Madam, said I to Mrs. Brenton, after perusing it—my fate is a strange one indeed; it persecutes me without mercy, and yet I have no one to blame.

Seeing Miss Brenton wipe her eyes—Nancy, said I, take copy from me; as my aunt has rightly told you, whoever courts

courts you, let it not be across the ocean: we cannot be sure of each other's minds at such a distance: and it is too far off to guard against accidents.

I then shed a flood of tears which came very seasonably to my relief. The efforts I had made to bear up against the grief that oppressed me, had entirely exhausted my spirits, and I found myself upon the point of fainting.

Never shall I forget the tenderness of Miss Brenton on this melancholy occasion: her affliction seemed equal to my own: she wept as bitterly, and

displayed a goodness of heart that endeared her to me more than ever.

Nor was my aunt less moved; but being a woman of long experience, and having gone through a multiplicity of trials herself, she was able to preserve more firmness and presence of mind. This, without diminishing her sympathy for my distress, qualified her to administer that comfort which I so much wanted.

This proved one of the most unhappy days I ever passed in my life. Mr. James Stanley, who visited us in the afternoon, judged my affliction too great, to venture on the subject which
he

he was commissioned to treat of on the part of Mr. Villars, who had been with him again that morning, and prevailed upon him to befriend the renewal of his addresses, should he find an opportunity.

But the situation of my mind afforded him none, and he had too much discernment and delicacy to be guilty of so improper an intrusion upon me, at a time when I was wholly absorbed in grief, and hardly in a condition to pay the attention I owed to the polite and feeling manner in which he condoled with me for the mortifying news he had brought.

From

From his family, and that of my dear Miss Longmore, I received all the consolation it was in their power to bestow. But my case was so singular, and involved in so many circumstances of perplexity, that it was difficult to judge of it rightly, and the more I thought of it, the greater I found my uncertainty.

The intelligence carried to Jamaica by Mr. Villars's relation, intimated no more than that having heard Mr. Stanley was married there, I had been induced to listen to the addresses of a gentleman, to whom it was expected I would give my hand. The information from Jamaica on the other
hand

hand amounted only to a report, that Mr. Stanley being apprized of Mr. Villars's addresses to me, had thought himself at liberty to pay his own to another lady.

These were doubtless heavy tidings for each of us; but as it had not been positively asserted that I was married to Mr. Villars, so neither was it said that Mr. Stanley had actually married the lady he was courting; nor was the courtship itself any more than a report.

These reflections were some alleviation to my grief; but the dread of his believing, that thinking him faithless I had given myself away, led me to

to fear that he would for the peace of his mind endeavour to forget me as soon as he could; in which case it was natural to apprehend he would not much longer resist the many temptations to which he had been so long exposed. They would now assail him with double force: and as he had only withstood them for my sake, he would probably yield to them when that inducement was removed.

In the mean time Miss Richardson had left Jamaica with the family that has been mentioned, and to the protection of which she was consigned by Mr. Grantham and Mr. Stanley, the latter being unable to accompany her on account of his wound. But
the

the ship in which she went, met with such stormy weather, that it was obliged to run into an American port to repair the damage it had sustained.

Mr. Grantham had proposed returning to England in company with Mr. Stanley; but when the latter was entirely recovered, he was persuaded by a naval officer of rank to accept the post of first lieutenant on board the ship he commanded, and Mr. Grantham took his departure without him.

When this gentleman was arrived in England, he made it his first business to wait upon his old school-fellow

fellow Mr. Villars, whom he found in his country retirement. As many years had elapsed since their separation, and they had always retained a high regard for each other, they were equally glad to meet again in their own country.

But Mr. Grantham did by no means approve of his friend's self-seclusion from society for the motive that had occasioned it. He was one of those men who, though not deficient in honour or honesty, yet did not think it becoming a manly character to suffer so much depression on account of a disappointment in love, as to fly to solitude for a refuge. His ideas of women

in women did not represent them to him as deserving so much consideration, as to give up all others for the sake of one. He was in a word a man of pleasure; and having probably never felt the power of love, he looked upon its tyranny as fictitious, or only prevalent over weak minds.

He used so many arguments with Mr. Villars to draw him out of his retreat, that he prevailed upon him at last to return to and reside at London. But in this, nevertheless, he would not have succeeded, had he not assured him, that if ever he was possessed of any penetration respecting man or woman-

womankind, he was certain that Mr. Stanley and Miss Richardson would be united in the bands of wedlock on the moment of his arrival in England. But that independant of his own persuasion, Mr. Stanley had told him in confidence, that a promise of marriage had been interchanged between them.

Rouzed by the latter part of this intelligence, Mr. Villars hesitated no longer in repairing to his house in town. He again applied to Mr. James Stanley, before whom he laid the information he had received from Mr. Grantham; who made no scruple to confirm

confirm it from his own mouth to that gentleman, with whom he was upon terms of great intimacy.

Armed with an authority of this weight, Mr. Villars wrote me a very long and forcible letter upon the subject; wherein he exculpated himself of all impropriety in addressing me again, from the evident determination taken by Mr. Stanley to pay his courtship to Miss Richardson, and the solemn engagement into which they had mutually entered.

Conformably to his request, I wrote him an answer; wherein, after acknowledging the great honour he did me by

by his perseverance, I entered with frankness which could not displease him into the dangers we should both incur, were we, upon the strength of reports which might prove groundless at last, venture upon the connexion he so eagerly proposed. He knew that my affection for him had been founded on a persuasion of my being forsaken and he knew we had been led to the brink of the precipice by this persuasion. It was therefore incumbent upon us both, henceforth to give no credit to any report, but to believe that only which we saw ourselves. Without calling Mr. Grantham's veracity the least in doubt, the engagement alluded to might be only conditional

ditional; that at all events no delay could be too long for the ascertaining of facts on which his felicity depended no less than mine. As I well knew from the nobleness and delicacy of his sentiments, that were we from error to form that union which he had so much at heart, he would never forgive himself for having committed it, and would consider himself as principal accessory for having so unadvisedly accelerated it.

Such was the purport of my reply; which, as it produced no answer, I concluded had made that impression upon him which I desired. But though he did not make use of his pen, he employed his friend Mr. Grantham to plead

plead his cause. A task which this gentleman executed with great willingness and fidelity; and at the same time with so much address and politeness in his manner, that had not Miss Brenton and I fully known the circumstance of his having married a woman as old again as himself, for the sake of her money, we should have taken him for a man susceptible of the most refined passion.

His eloquence and dexterity, though exerted with all the good breeding of a real gentleman, was totally useless. My answers to him, though civil, were plain and decisive. I gave him to understand, that although I valued Mr. Villars as much as he himself could

could wish, of which I had given him sufficient proofs, while I thought myself at my own disposal, he must be sensible that I could not with prudence or decency countenance his addresses in my present state of uncertainty.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ARRIVAL IN ENGLAND OF MISS
RICHARDSON — INTRODUCTION
OF MISS WOODVILLE TO THAT
LADY.

WHILE matters were in this suspense, Miss Richardson arrived in England. The family in whose company she came being intimately acquainted with Mr. James Stanley, he was soon informed of their arrival,

val, and that of the young lady who accompanied them; and to his great satisfaction found that she was yet single. He hastened on the wings of friendship to bring us the joyful news, which Mrs. and Miss Brenton received with as much satisfaction as myself.

But though the nuptial knot was not tied, yet as a promissory contract reciprocally subsisted, I was impatient to know of what nature it was; whether written or merely verbal. As this was a matter of great delicacy, Miss Longmore, Miss Brenton, and myself, who were the most eager for a discovery, were much puzzled how to make one.

Fortunately for our design, a gentlewoman who entertained a particular regard for Miss Longmore, was upon very familiar terms with Miss Richardson's aunt, with whom, as being her nearest relation, she now intended to live upon her return to England. This aunt, who was mistress of a plentiful fortune, and had no children, had brought up Miss Richardson, who, upon losing her mother in her infancy, had been sent over to be educated in England under her care.

To this gentlewoman Miss Longmore imparted the whole affair relating to Mr. Stanley and me. She directly espoused my cause with the most friendly warmth; saying that a match
between

between Mr. Stanley and Miss Richardson could only be productive of much vexation to both, when that gentleman found himself in a mistake with regard to me.

By means of this gentlewoman's intimacy with Miss Richardson's aunt, I discovered the promise to have been mutually made by word of mouth only, on that young lady's departure from Jamaica, and that no person was present at it's making.

This relieved me from an anxiety, which my subsequent acquaintance with Miss Richardson soon convinced me was needless; as neither she nor Mr. Stanley were of a character to

insist upon the performance of promises which either of them might be averse to fulfil.

Mr. James Stanley, who was equally sensible of the impropriety of the match in question, united his efforts with those of that gentlewoman in order to prevent it. While she exerted her influence over the aunt, he applied himself to the family in whose company Miss Richardson had taken her passage. Through the agreeableness of her manner, and the excellence of her disposition, she had insinuated herself so much into their good graces, and was become such a favourite, that in order to please them, she was obliged to divide her
time

time between her aunt and her new guardians, as they affectionately called themselves.

It was in this family Mr. James Stanley renewed his acquaintance with this young lady, of whom he gave such an advantageous description, that had I not been interested in opposing her union with Mr. Stanley on my account, I should have been zealously desirous to prevent it upon her own; and had it only been for the sake of preserving her from the unhappiness of marrying a man, with whom she must have been miserable, on his discovering that he had wronged the woman whom he loved, from an er-

roneous notion that she had forsaken him.

I was, in truth, so much prepossessed in favour of Miss Richardson, that I conceived a violent desire to be acquainted with her. To this purpose I entreated him to procure me the pleasure of seeing her at his house; to which he readily consented.

Previous to this interview, the gentlewoman before mentioned had fully succeeded in dissuading her aunt from countenancing the match with Mr. Stanley, and he had been equally successful himself in the family where she was so much beloved.

It

It was not however without much grief that she saw herself obliged to give up her pretensions to Mr. Stanley. While she yielded to the generosity of her disposition, her good sense quickly convinced her at the same time, of the necessity of such a resignation for her future peace. But she could not suppress the mortification she felt at losing a man whom she had so long admired, and upon whom she had at last thought herself entitled to place her affections with security.

In order to gratify my curiosity, Mr. James Stanley's lady invited the family of which Miss Richardson was such a favourite, to drink tea and
G 5 spend.

spend the evening together with that young lady. Miss Longmore and Miss Brenton were of the party with me.

Miss Richardson, though totally unacquainted with my person, had frequently heard my name mentioned, as the lady with whom Mr. Stanley had been so long pre-engaged. It became therefore highly necessary to conceal it.

When I arrived with my two companions at Mr. Stanley's, we found the company was all met, and engaged in conversation upon an accident that had happened the evening before at Ranelagh, where Miss Richardson had been with her aunt and some other relations.

relations. A young gentleman, extremely handsome, and who by his dress and appearance was a person of fashion, had fixed his eye upon Miss Richardson the moment she first entered the Rotunda. He was accompanied by another gentleman, with whom he walked round the room in a contrary direction to Miss Richardson, the better to see and examine her as often as they met. His looks shewed that she had attracted his particular regard: he seemed wholly taken up with her; and she found him wherever she went. He was accosted at last by a gay young officer, who called him (loud enough to be heard) by the name of Sir William. But though his company seemed to be

much courted by those who met him, he still continued to keep as much as he possibly could in sight of Miss Richardson, and to pay little attention to any thing else. The place was so crowded, that in one of his rounds, happening to meet Miss Richardson opposite to him, the hilt of his sword got so entangled in her apron, that it was with difficulty he could disengage it. A merry gentleman who was coming by, could not help saying they seemed so well paired, that it was a pity they should be parted.— Ah! madam, said the young gentleman to Miss Richardson, I wish these words may prove prophetic. On her departure he followed her to the door, and was observed to speak to a footman

man who seemed to belong to him, and whom, doubtless, he ordered to make what enquiries he could concerning the lady whom he pointed out to him.

Mrs. Wilson, the lady with whom Miss Richardson came from Jamaica, was positive that the gentleman who took notice of their being well paired, was not in the least mistaken, as they were both young and handsome, and as she had observed her lovely ward's eyes not to betray any displeasure at the homage that was paid to her charms; adding, that the title of lady would become her in a peculiar manner, from the gracefulness and dignity of

of her deportment, as well as from the beauty of her person, and the many accomplishments she possessed.

To this affectionate compliment Miss Richardson made an answer equally replete with good sense and modesty. This virtue sat upon her with an ease that added a lustre to all the qualities which it accompanied. The compliment which Mrs. Wilson had just paid her raised a gentle blush in her cheeks, that gave her a most amiable and enchanting air. I could perceive that Miss Longmore and Miss Brenton were charmed with her as well as myself.

This,

This, in truth, every one must have been that saw her. She was in every respect what Mrs. Wilson had said. Her person was tall, and of the most exact proportion: her eyes were black and lively; her hair of the same colour; her complexion inclining to the pale, but clear, bright, and healthy; and her aspect altogether was full of nobleness and grandeur.

As to the perfections of her mind, I had afterwards ample opportunities of discovering them. In this first conversation, I perceived enough to convince me that I had heard nothing to her advantage which I might not safely credit.

It

It was very remarkable that she singled me out of all present, directing her discourse chiefly to me, as if she was particularly desirous to be acquainted with me. I returned her partiality with the sincerest warmth; and did it the more readily, as I was highly impatient to obtain an interest in her heart, before she discovered who I was.

This discovery however was made much sooner than I expected. — While she was engaged with me and Miss Longmore and Miss Brenton at an harpsichord, which she played most admirably, Mr. Grantham was announced. I turned pale on hearing him

him mentioned, and made a sign to Miss Brenton to withdraw with me into another room; but Mr. Stanley, who observed it, taking me by the hand — Stay, said he, this matter cannot be cleared up too soon.

He had hardly spoken these words, when Mr. Grantham entered. As soon as he saw me, he bowed with particular respect, addressing me by my name, and expressing much satisfaction at seeing me. Barring that hateful circumstance of his marriage, which I never could forgive him; he was an agreeable man, of a chearful, complaisant behaviour, and one that knew how to make himself welcome in all companies.

After

After paying his civilities, to me, he turned to Miss Richardson, calling her his lovely ward, and speaking to her in a most tender and affectionate manner.

The moment he named me, I took notice that Miss Richardson reddened and looked at me with surprize. I was not a little confused. Mr. Stanley, who saw that we were both embarrassed, came to us with a most significant smile, and taking each of us by one of our hands—Let those, said he, whose hearts are united by merit and mutual sympathy, be never separated by a groundless jealousy. So saying, he locked our hands together with an air of paternal authority

rity and benevolence. I seconded his kind intent with the utmost acquiescence. Taking her hand in both mine, I pressed it to my bosom in a most loving and respectful manner. Miss Richardson was much moved: her mind suffered visibly great agitation, and her colour changed several times. She was at last so overcome, that she sat herself down, gently withdrawing her hand from mine; but seeing me shed tears at this, she returned it to me again with a smile of goodness and dignity that made me fully sensible of her worth, and of the condescension with which she behaved to a rival, to whom she yielded the object of her dearest affections.

While

While this scene was passing, the attention of all present was fixed upon us both, and there was not a dry eye in the company. Mr. Grantham, though unused to the melting mood, could not refrain from dropping a tear with the rest.—Sir, said he to Mr. Stanley, I owe you an imitation of the example you have given, in wishing to those two worthy young ladies that unalterable friendship for each other, of which they are equally so deserving. The union of two such excellent characters has my full consent. He accompanied these words with the joining our hands together, as Mr. Stanley had done.

This

This gentleman had previously acquainted Mr. and Mrs. Wilson with the purpose of this meeting. I shrewdly suspected it. From the moment of my first entrance, they eyed me with an attentiveness that shewed me I was the peculiar object of their thoughts. Miss Richardson was the only one who did not know me, till Mr. Grantham's arrival brought the whole matter to light.

After some silence, Mr. Stanley addressing himself with great composure and gravity to Mr. Grantham—Sir, said he, I am glad that you have been present at this first interview of two young ladies for whom we both
enter-

entertain the highest affection and respect. The interest I felt in the happiness of both induced me to lay their respective cases before Mr. Wilson and Miss Richardson's aunt. They were both convinced, as well as myself, that were my cousin to marry this young lady, or any other, and find afterwards that Miss Woodville had kept herself single on his account, against all solicitations and reports, the consequences of such marriage would prove fatal to both parties. As we concurred all three in this opinion without an instant's hesitation, I flatter myself that you will, from the same motive, honour us with your approbation.

Sir,

Sir, said Mr. Grantham (with a manly openness), the felicity of my lovely ward is of too serious a moment to me, to differ from you in a point, which I will take the credit of having settled in my own mind conformably to your's, before you made me acquainted with it. I came hither for the very purpose of disclosing my sentiments, and have already signified them to Mr. Villars; whom I doubt not, reason and reflection will reconcile to the necessity of desisting from any further pretensions to Miss Woodville.

This declaration afforded much satisfaction to Mr. Stanley, who acknowledged that he had never in his life met with any affair so singularly perplexed

plexed with difficulties, and of which the settlement had cost him so much anxiety.

During this discourse between the two gentlemen, I sat pensive beside Miss Richardson, who now and then gave me a look full of compassion and friendship. As soon as the conclusion of the business concerning us both had given room for another subject of conversation, she took that opportunity of assuring me, that she no sooner saw me, than she felt an invincible prepossession in my favour: it had grieved her to find I was her rival; but when she came to consider how the case stood between us, she had too great a sense of equity, to blame

blame me for having a better right to Mr. Stanley's affections than she could possibly claim. He came to me, said she, for comfort, thinking he had lost you, and I admitted of him upon that supposition; but had he known what now I know, Miss Woodville alone would have dwelt in his heart to this hour. There may she ever dwell; and may I never forget how unhappy I should have been, had I usurped a place there which I must so shortly have resigned.

This kind speech penetrated me with gratitude and with admiration at the nobleness as well as the rectitude of her sentiments. We spent the residue of the evening in that delightful inter-

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course of mutual confidence and endearments in which two minds above dissimulation, and convinced of each other's honourable dispositions, enjoy such inexpressible pleasure.

We parted with the kindest promises of cultivating the most friendly correspondence and acquaintance. Miss Longmore and Miss Brenton were included in this new association; not more at their own desire, than Miss Richardson's, who had conceived as favourable an idea of them as they had of her.

CHAPTER XXV.

MR. STANLEY RETURNS TO ENGLAND—HIS INTERVIEW WITH MISS WOODVILLE—HIS CHARACTER, AND MARRIAGE WITH THAT LADY.

IT now remained to see, whether after overcoming so many difficulties, Fortune might not create other trials of my patience. It was a great diminution of the serenity I was be-

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ginning

ginning to feel, that Mr. Stanley should have altered his resolution to return to England, and been prevailed upon to continue on the station where he had so long remained. But Fortune, to make me some amends for the many mortifications I had suffered, rendered this circumstance the very means of his revisiting England sooner than he had expected, or perhaps intended. The ship of which he was first lieutenant was ordered home, as convoy to a fleet of merchantmen, and he arrived at Portsmouth a few days after Mr. Grantham's arrival at London.

The

The first place to which Mr. Stanley repaired on his coming to London, was the house of his cousin, who was unspeakably rejoiced to see him. Pressing him to his bosom with the most friendly warmth—My dear Charles, said he, I congratulate you not so much upon your return to your native country, as for having escaped the greatest calamity that could have befallen you. But Fortune took pity on you, and your mistress is safe.

Mr. Stanley imagining from these words, that Miss Richardson had been in danger at sea, took notice the

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weather

weather had of late been very stormy, and that the fleet he came in had a very tempestuous passage. After expressing his satisfaction at her safety in the warmest terms, he added that she was now become the dearest object of his thoughts, after the loss of one whom he had so long preferred to her, but whom he found himself deprived of through a fatal mistake, for which neither she nor himself were responsible, and which could only be considered as one of those many untoward accidents which human wisdom cannot obviate, and by which the destiny of man is often fixed in so unexpected a manner.

Charles,

Charles, said his cousin (assuming a pleasant countenance), your observation is very just, but does not apply to your case. - You will understand me better, by consulting one who is waiting for you up stairs.

It happened that Mr. James Stanley had that day invited Mr. Wilson's and Mrs. Brenton's family to dinner. Miss Richardson came with the former, and I of course with the latter. We were all at tea, when the servant came up, and informed Mr. James Stanley, that a gentleman dressed in a naval uniform desired to speak with him. We were immediately of opinion that he brought letters, or

intelligence at least, from Mr. Stanley. I felt myself much agitated, and I observed that Miss Richardson turned pale.

Mr. James Stanley going down stairs, the above-mentioned interview took place between him and his cousin in the parlour. The last words he spoke excited so much surprize in Mr. Stanley, that looking fixed at his cousin—My dear friend, said he, this is a riddle which I cannot comprehend, and of which your manner of speaking makes me extremely anxious to hear the explanation.—That you shall presently, answered his cousin, after I have obtained the permission requisite for that purpose.

Having

Having thus prepared Mr. Stanley for something extraordinary, he came up to us with a look full of joy, but at the same time mixed with anxiety. Fixing his eyes upon me—My dear Miss Woodville, said he, though your fate is far from unpropitious, yet I could wish that it's decisions were more gently intimated.

He then paused, and putting on a serious countenance, desired Mr. Wilson to accompany him into another room. Here having acquainted him with Mr. Stanley's arrival, they both agreed to consult Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Brenton in what manner to proceed. Those ladies being called in

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accord-

accordingly, Mr. James Stanley told them that he had acted in this manner purposely to apprize Miss Richardson and me that we were deeply interested in what was now transacting, and that by being thus forewarned, we might be better able to go through the scene that was preparing.

In the mean time I sat by Miss Richardson, holding her tenderly by the hand.—I fear, said she, we are both concerned in the present business. Whatever it may be, I wish it may terminate to your satisfaction; it shall not end otherwise, if it depends upon me. To this generous expression, of
which

which I could not misunderstand the meaning, I answered by pressing her hand to my bosom.

Miss Longmore and Miss Brenton, who made no doubt the matter regarded us two in particular, expressed great solicitude for it's happy issue; exhorting us both to look forward with cheerfulness and courage, as we had already settled every thing that was essential, to our mutual satisfaction.

I was not however, I must confess, without my fears. Great and uncommon as Mr. Stanley's attachment had been to me, it was five years since we had seen each other; and I could

not but reflect on the consequences that so usually attend a long absence, especially when such an enchanting object as Miss Richardson had so long been held out to him as a temptation.

While I was pondering on this melancholy idea, Mr. James Stanley returned with his company. Coming up to me—What would you give, said he, to know that Mr. Stanley is in England?—My sincerest thanks, I replied, to you, Sir, for bringing me such agreeable intelligence.—But what, proceeded he, if I were to inform you that he is in London? Here he stopped, looking attentively at Miss Richardson

Richardson and me, in order to discover the effect which his words had produced.

Sir, said Miss Richardson, with an aspect of composure and dignity that struck the whole company with admiration, I sincerely wish that Mr. Stanley were present, that I might congratulate him on the recovery of one whom he thinks totally lost, and have the inexpressible pleasure of restoring him to my dear Miss Woodville.

Such a strain of generosity was received with the applause which it so highly merited. I could only express my feelings by pressing her hand affectionately,

fectionately, and shewing her by my looks that my heart was full of gratitude.

In the mean while Mr. James Stanley went down to his cousin, accompanied by Mr. Wilson, who had been very well acquainted with him at Jamaica. — Cousin, said Mr. James Stanley, I have brought you a friend who expressed the greatest desire to wish you joy of the felicity that is awaiting you, and to which you are so justly entitled.

He then explained to him all that had past between Miss Richardson and me, and concluded by letting him know that we were both in his house.

Mr.

Mr. Stanley sat awhile wrapt in silent astonishment at what he heard.—Cousin, said he at last, I know not which of those two young ladies is most worthy of our respect; the one for her unshaken truth and constancy, the other for the exaltedness of her sentiments.

While the three gentlemen were below, Mrs. Brenton, conformably to what had been settled, took me by the hand, saying—We cannot be too thankful, my dear Augusta, for the partiality of Fortune, in bestowing upon us such a friend as Miss Richardson. The nobleness of her mind seems peculiarly calculated for the occasions that have called it forth. I rejoice at being witness of so much
magna-

magnanimity in one of my sex. Madam, continued she, turning to Miss Richardson, the wish that fell so generously from your lips, in a few minutes will be granted. Mr. Stanley will have the honour of throwing himself at your feet, and receiving from your hands that gift which your upright soul would not suffer you to deprive him of.

This speech of my aunt filled us with amazement. Miss Richardson leaned on my shoulder in a dejected posture, wiping the tears that wetted her cheeks, and hiding her eyes with her handkerchief. Her situation was certainly very moving. For a young woman at her age consenting to give
up

up the man she loved, was an arduous and severe trial. She went through it, nevertheless, with calmness and resolution, after her first emotions were subsided.

She was still leaning upon me, and holding my hand, when the three gentlemen entered the room. Mr. Charles Stanley started at seeing Miss Richardson and me in this affectionate attitude. The moment I saw him I attempted to rise; but my strength instantly failed me, and I fainted away in Miss Richardson's arms. On recovering my spirits, I found him on his knees before us both, sprinkling my face with water.

A pro-

A profound silence reigned during some time. Every one present was so powerfully affected, that I could easily perceive they had all paid the tribute of tears to the scene that passed before them. But no one seemed so disconsolate as Mr. Stanley: his looks were pale and sorrowful, and seemed to denote the anguish he felt for the situation of a lovely woman, who was to be sacrificed to his re-union with me.

The first who broke silence was Miss Richardson. With a faint and low voice, in which however firmness and determination were discoverable—Mr. Stanley, said she (placing my hand

in his), you were born for each other, and I am happy not to have parted you.

We both fell at her feet, taking each of us one of her hands, and kissing it with the utmost rapture of gratitude. She received our caresses with an air of benignity, and self-consciousness of how truly she deserved them.—I do an act of justice, said she, but it is no less an act of the most exquisite pleasure to me, when I consider to whom it is done.

This interview with Mr. Stanley was attended by too many affecting circumstances not to leave a strong impression

pression upon the minds of all present. The remainder of the evening was spent, in consequence, with a tranquil, or rather a melancholy kind of satisfaction on all sides. Miss Richardson, by the serenity of her countenance, and the unaffected placidity of her discourse, enjoyed, I firmly believe, as much heartfelt content as any person present, Mr. Stanley and myself not excepted.

She sat by me the whole evening, conversing with me in so friendly and affectionate a manner, that I knew not whether to admire or to love her most. That greatness of mind which enables us to go through the various
diffi-

difficulties and disappointments of life, is never, in my own opinion, so completely manifested, as in those instances where we submit from reason and reflection, to the resignation of a mistress or of a lover.

When we parted, she embraced me with a fervour that could only flow from the sincerity of her regard.—I have, said she to Mr. Stanley, overheard Miss Woodville's conversation with you this evening, by way of paying myself in friendship for what I am to lose in love.

Mr. Stanley accompanied Mr. Wilson's family to their house; from whence their carriage sat him down at his lodgings,

lodgings, which were at a small distance. When he took his leave of them—Farewell, Mr. Stanley, said Miss Richardson; and remember how much you owe to me.

He waited upon me early the next morning. This I may call the first visit he paid me in quality of a lover. What passed between us may be easily imagined by those who love truly, and meet again after a long absence embittered by many dangers of losing each other. I shall therefore pass over the reciprocal felicity we enjoyed in recollecting the various embarrassments we had encountered, and the many trials of our mutual fidelity which we had stood, unshaken.

But

But to his great credit, as well as to mine, most of our conversation was taken up with the praises of Miss Richardson. He gave me such an account of her, that had it not been for that invincible attachment which had grown up with him from his infancy, and was become habitual and irradicable, I should not have been able to account how he could have preserved his fidelity to a woman who lived so many thousand miles from him, and whom in the course of things he might never see again, while so enchanting a one was in a manner continually present to his sight.

He

He told me, that notwithstanding I was much altered and improved, as he was kindly pleased to call it, in my personal perfections, he should have recognized me at the first glance wherever he had seen me. This I readily believed, as I could have said as much of him. The fact is indeed, unless I am much deceived, that when the image of a beloved object is deeply engraven in the heart, it will never depart from the memory.

Though from every circumstance relating to himself which he mentioned, I felt the truth and strength of his attachment to me, there was one which gave me pain ever after, as often as it obtruded

obtruded itself to my recollection. This was the resolution he had taken never to see me any more, unless Fortune should replace him on the same footing he was at the first period of our acquaintance. I frequently took from thence occasion to reproach him that his pride much exceeded his love for me: and it always gave me uneasiness to reflect in what a precarious balance my felicity had long been suspended, and how many chances had been thrown into the scale against me.

He had however nothing to complain of on the score of Fortune. To say nothing of his many personal escapes from death and wounds in

numerous engagements, he had not only repaired, but more than doubled his primitive fortune. This, to a man of his high spirit, was a circumstance the more flattering, as it made his fortune equal to mine.

But these advantages bore no comparison to the noble endowments of his heart and mind. His valour and professional skill were superiorly eminent. He had, as I remember to have read of the famous Sir Walter Raleigh, lost no time that could be spared from the duties of his vocation. His reading and knowledge surprized all those who were acquainted with the activity of his disposition. There was hardly any branch of science in which

he

he was not well conversant, and in those that are peculiarly becoming a gentleman he was allowed to be complete.

With respect to his character, it was not only spotless in every essential consideration; but even free from those many little blemishes which the tongue of Scandal and Malevolence takes so much pleasure in holding forth to the malicious world. His generosity was such as rendered him the idol of all who were under his command; and his humanity was so attentive to the wants of others, that he was often known to have denied himself conveniences which he

had been solicitous to procure for such as were inferior to him in station,

This benevolent and generous temper was not however, as it too often happens, the result of a careless and indolent frame of mind. He was keen and active in whatever he took in hand; vigilant and enterprizing in the highest degree; clear-sighted in discovering his real interest, and pursuing it with unwearied steadiness. Though full of ambition, yet too prudent to sacrifice his solid welfare to vain appearance, and careful for that reason not to deviate from the track in which he found himself so prosperous. From this motive he

con-

contented himself with the rank to which he had attained, and never coveted a higher. This, together with the favour and good-will he constantly met with from his superiors, procured him perpetually the command of such vessels as, though small, he knew would best answer the purposes he had in view, which were to enrich himself at the expence of the enemy. The captures he made were continual, and usually very considerable. But he had too much discretion to make any parade of his success, and as he enjoyed it without ostentation, it procured him no envy.

He was now arrived at that time of life when the passions, though in

their full strength, begin to yield to the dictates of Reason. He had now attained his thirtieth year. His person was of the middle size; neat, well constructed, and full of agility. He had a vivacity in his mien and manners that was extremely pleasing, as it was tempered with great circumspectfulness and modesty. He was remarkably well bred; but his civility was frank and manly; and he abhorred all finicalness either in discourse or behaviour. His countenance was open, and spoke the goodness of his heart; his complexion inclining to brown; his eyes blue and piercing, and though expressive of resolution and authority, yet fraught with cheerfulness and good-nature.

Such

Such was the man, whom after experiencing so many uncommon vicissitudes myself, and running so many hazards of losing him, Fortune thought proper to bestow upon me at last, as a reward for my patience in the enduring of so many trials, and of my constancy in persevering true to him in the midst of the various temptations with which I had been so closely assailed during the course of our long absence.

The courtship between us had been carried on too long and too sincerely to need any additional formality. After paying what was due to decency, we were happily married a short time after his return to England, to the

great satisfaction of all his friends and mine.

Proposing, as he said, to lead a private and quiet life, after having lived a public and active one for so many years, he purchased a commodious house, both rural and elegant, about one hundred miles distant from London. Here we remained regularly nine months in the year, devoting the other three to the winter amusements of the capital.

The fatigues he had gone through in the sea service, and in unhealthy climates, had been so excessive and severe, that they laid the foundation of a complaint which, though slight, and

and therefore disregarded for many years, occasioned us at last to make several excursions to the south of France. It terminated at last in a decline which carried him off in his fifty-fourth year, to my inexpressible grief, and the unfeigned regret of all that knew him.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CONCLUSION OF THE RESPECTIVE
STORIES OF MISS RICHARDSON,
MISS BRENTON, AND MR. VIL-
LARS.

HAVING thus concluded that part of my story wherein I was principally concerned, it may not be amiss to pay some further attention to those who have also taken up so large a share in the preceding narrative.

Miss

Miss Richardson, my lovely rival, and who retained ever after the first place in my affections of any of her sex, did not remain long single. The accomplishments of her mind, no less than the exquisite beauty of her person, raised her admirers wherever she shewed herself. The noble part she had acted towards me became quickly known, and added, as it well might do, most highly to her character.

A few months after my marriage to Mr. Stanley, she paid us a visit at a country house we had taken for that summer, in company with Mr. Wilson and Mr. James Stanley's family. Here it was, that on a Sunday

at church she was seen by the gentleman who had taken such particular notice of her at Ranelagh. As his rank and fortune were known, and his character unexceptionable, he procured without difficulty an admittance to Miss Richardson. He proved, upon a further acquaintance, a person of such agreeable manners and excellent disposition, that conformably to his own wish on his first meeting with that young lady, he had the felicity of obtaining her affections, and of being honoured at last with her hand.

I must do this dearest of friends the justice to say, that the title of baronet, with which the young gentleman was decorated, had not the smallest

smallest share in the motives that decided her in his favour. She had too much magnanimity to stoop to any man for the sake of an appellation, and had too much intrinsic dignity to think the higher of herself for such a mere addition to her name.

My beautiful and lively cousin, Miss Brenton, the faithful and spirited companion of the most extraordinary of all my adventures, though adorned with every external grace that woman could wish for, and possessed of every intellectual accomplishment that could charm the wisest man, still remained inflexibly averse to the many homages that were paid to her.

She

She had conceived so strong a prepossession in favour of her first lover, that it was long before she thought it possible any other man could rival him in her affections. She continued three years in a state of uncertainty with respect to that gentleman; till hearing from Mrs. Morrison that an union with him was absolutely impracticable, she was on the point of embracing the Roman Catholic religion, in order to remove the obstacle that stood between them. It was not without much difficulty that her mother, assisted by my tears and entreaties, and those of Miss Longmore, could induce her to alter this determination. The fact was that the story of Mrs. Barking having often been

been repeated, and urged with much earnestness, she acknowledged the danger to which she must inevitably be exposed; and for a while resolved to subdue the unhappy passion that tormented her. But after having seemingly suppressed it, she found it had only lain dormant, as it broke out again with fresh violence. The only remedy therefore was to conform to the religion of the man she loved: this would at once set aside the obstruction that kept them asunder, and obviate the grievance of which that unhappy gentlewoman had complained. In this resolution she persisted some time, with an obstinacy which nothing could conquer. The excessive agitations of mind which she suffered upon this

this occasion, threw her at last into a fever, of which we all feared at first the consequences would be fatal. Her youth however, and the goodness of her constitution, enabled her at last to overcome it; and what was no less satisfactory, her reason began to operate, and to shew things in a proper light. In the mean time, the utter silence on the part of Mr. Chabot seemed to us a conclusive proof that finding insurmountable difficulties on the accomplishment of his intentions, he had entirely dropt them, and we took care to represent the change of her religion, by which she proposed to overcome those impediments as an action unworthy of a woman of spirit; and which, were it
to

to have the effect proposed, which was however a matter of doubt, would expose her to the accusation of hypocrisy.

After a severe conflict, she came out at last so far victorious as to think no longer of the expedient of abandoning her own persuasion for another. Her pride too was piqued at not having received a single line from him during the space of six months. He had till then regularly corresponded with her through the medium of Mrs. Morrison; but had suddenly ceased writing, without her being able to assign any cause. His very last letter, like all the preceding,

had

had assured her that he was exerting his utmost to procure the cancelling of the inhibition that had been laid upon him; and seemed even to hint, that he entertained hopes of succeeding. His long silence now convinced her that either he totally despaired of success, and was averse to write upon that account, or that possibly he had swerved from his fidelity.

This last idea preponderated in her apprehensions. The rather as Mademoiselle Chabot (who still continued her correspondence) was of late become unusually severe in arraigning the injustice of those who had from mistaken motives prevented her brother from acting

acting as he proposed, and complained in the bitterest terms of the violence that had been done to his inclinations, yet seemed industriously to avoid entering into particulars.

Miss Brenton's patience being at last exhausted at this indecisiveness of her correspondent, she requested Mrs. Morrison, in the most forcible manner, to gratify her so far as she was able with an information of the exact state of the case between her and Mr. Chabot.

This good lady had long been earnestly desirous of bringing about a match between this gentleman and Miss Brenton. Among other motives to

to encourage him in his pursuit, she had not forgot to mention the large accession to that young lady's fortune; by which she was now become, were it only in that light, a desirable object to a man of the highest rank. But the same spirit of bigotry which had deprived him of his mistress, now forced upon him a wife. It was signified to him that he would render himself particularly deserving of the royal approbation by accepting the hand of a certain lady, who was every way worthy of him. Such a mandate was by no means to be disobeyed.

In this manner was brought about the final separation between Miss Brenton and Mr. Chabert. As this
gen-

gentleman, by the death of his cousin Mr. Tavannes, inherited his claims and pretensions, the old canon was determined that his niece should partake of the titles and rank which were to devolve upon him, and had for that purpose set every engine to work that he could possibly bethink himself of. Being a crafty, artful man, and much connected with people in power, he had by dint of intrigue, and alledging every pretence that could be devised, succeeded completely to his wishes.

Mrs. Morrison, to whom Mademoiselle Chabot imparted all the particulars of this affair, could not for some time prevail upon herself to forward such disagreeable intelligence to Miss Brenton,

ton, whose attachment to Mr. Chabort, she well knew, would fill her with affliction on receiving it. Being pressed however in the manner above-mentioned, she found herself under the necessity of concealing it no longer.

She wrote accordingly to Mrs. Brenton, inclosing in her letter a copy of that which Mademoiselle Chabort had written to her concerning this transaction. By this copy it appeared, that Mons. Chabort had been married to the canon's niece above six months; at which time he had directed his sister to acquaint Mrs. Morrison with what had happened, and to request that lady to lay his sincerest homages before

before Miss Brenton, and to assure her that no other motive upon earth than the commands laid upon him by an authority which it was not in his power to resist, could have compelled him to do what he hoped she would do him the justice to believe was much against his inclinations. He grievously lamented the severity of his fate. He wished every denomination of felicity to Miss Brenton, and concluded by conjuring her in the most pathetic terms to forget him as soon as possible for both their sakes.

The receipt of this letter, which accounted for Mons. Chabott's silence, though it greatly affected Miss Brenton,

ton, yet as the violence of her passion was abated, and she was partly prepared for some news of this kind, she bore it with a tolerable degree of resignation and fortitude.

But a considerable space of time elapsed before she fully recovered from this blow. Had Mons. Chabot proved faithless, she would, she said, have soon consigned him to contempt and oblivion; but having nothing to reproach him, she commiserated his destiny, and could not refuse him every tender feeling.

In the mean time every effort was used by Mrs. Brenton, Miss Longmore, and me, to work an effectual cure.

Every

Every pleasure and amusement that we could devise were employed to this end. All her friends and our's cooperated with the utmost warmth on this occasion; and though she mended but slowly, yet we had the satisfaction to see that our endeavours were not wholly lost.

But as time and accidents decide the fate of all human beings, it was chiefly to them we looked for aid in her case. They served us opportunely when we little expected it. Mons. Chabot, who had married in pure compliance with authority, could not be expected to entertain much regard for a person whom he had taken through compulsion; the consequence was, that

he soon fell into a licentious course of living. As he had not been permitted to marry an English wife, he resolved however to have an English mistress. Coming over to England in company with some other French gentlemen, he became acquainted with a very handsome woman that was kept by an English gentleman, who had served in Germany, and been made a prisoner of war by a party commanded by Mons. Chabot, who had treated him with great generosity. This gentleman was glad of an opportunity to return the civilities he had received, and gave Mons. Chabot the most friendly reception. The gentleman's mistress had long been a woman of intrigue, and did not seem to value herself on a

constant

constant attachment to any man in particular. He knew all this; but was so fascinated by her wit and beauty, of both which she had an extraordinary share, that he could not be brought to part with her. Her infidelity to him became at last so flagrant, that he took the resolution to dismiss her from his house, where she had reigned absolute mistress above two years. While he was signifying his intent to her one morning at breakfast, Monsi. Chabert, (who was engaged in a party with him that day, happened to come in. Finding by their discourse that they were upon unfriendly terms, he was about to withdraw; but taking him by the hand—Stay, Sir, said she,

your friend discharges me from his protection for being as false to him as he is to me. I frankly acknowledge that I have been, and will ever be so, to every man who treats me in the same manner ; but I can as truly protest, that I never was unfaithful to those who were true to me.

The gentleman pulling out his pocket-book, presented her a bank note of fifty pounds ; but she told him (with an air of indignation) that she took presents only from her friends ; that having already received what was due to her upon the agreement made between them, when she consented to live with him, she scorned to be benefited

nefited by a farthing more of his money than she had a right to demand.

This strange mixture of effrontery and magnanimity struck Mons. Chabort, upon whom her charms had already made an impression, of which she had taken notice. But though he was become a man of pleasure and gallantry, he was scrupulously strict in abstaining from the least endeavour to seduce any woman not only from the path of virtue, but even from the connexions she might have formed with other men.

He had the delicacy of waiting several days upon this occasion, in order to afford an opportunity for a recon-

conciliation between the gentleman and his mistress; but meeting her accidentally in the Park, and enquiring whether she had restored him to her favour, she made answer that whenever she came to a separation, it was her maxim never to re-unite. This gave room to a long conversation between them, the issue of which was, that he took her into keeping. They agreed so well together, that she consented on his departure from England, to accompany him to France; where she behaved so well to him, that he never forsook her.

This adventure, together with several others antecedent to it, coming to the knowledge of Miss Brenton, operated
speedily

speedily a final cure. She regained by degrees her cheerfulness and vivacity, and became again the life and delight of all her acquaintance.

My brother, after the breaking off his courtship with Miss Villars, had given himself up to solitude and dejection. Mrs. Brenton and I were of opinion, that the surest remedy for him would be to travel. To this he was not averse himself, well foreseeing the inutility of striving to regain his mistress.

At the time of Miss Brenton's entire recovery from her unfortunate attachment, he was just returned from

abroad, highly improved in every respect. He had in particular worn off that reservedness of which he had before too remarkable a share, and was become in every sense a most accomplished and agreeable young gentleman.

Mrs. Brenton, who had long ardently desired him for a son-in-law, lost no occasion of procuring him the good graces of her daughter, who was far from being, on her side, insensible of his many good qualities. His person was uncommonly elegant, and added no small lustre to his intrinsic merit.

The intimacy subsisting between our family and Mrs. Brenton's brought my brother

brother and her daughter so frequently together, that they soon viewed each other with the eyes of lovers. Their mutual liking meeting with every encouragement, they were at length united in the bands of matrimony, to the unspeakable satisfaction of Mrs. Brenton, and no less to my own.

I have already observed that Mr. Grantham had acquainted Mr. James Stanley that he had dissuaded Mr. Villars from prosecuting his courtship of me. The fact was, that Miss Richardson's aunt concurred so readily with Mr. Wilson and Mr. James Stanley in the impropriety and danger that must attend a marriage between her and his

cousin, that Mr. Grantham, on cool deliberation, could not in reason differ from them, and urged this unanimity of sentiments on that subject to Mr. Villars, as a convincing argument against any further pursuit of his intentions respecting me.

Mr. Stanley's arrival shortly after, and our ensuing marriage, having put a decisive period to all his expectations, he resolved to take his final leave of this matter by writing me a letter of congratulation. It was indited in so elegant, so tender, and yet so discreet and guarded a manner, that it highly increased the great opinion I had always entertained of the excellence of his

his understandings and the nobleness of his sentiments. It contained a compliment to Mr. Stanley, of a most delicate and exquisite strain. He could not help telling me, on reading this letter, that had he known what a rival he had to encounter, he should have almost despaired of my fidelity.

With Mr. Stanley's permission and entire approbation, I wrote Mr. Villars an answer; in which I exercised all the powers of thought and language I was mistress of, to testify the deep sense I preserved of the uncommon regard he had shewn me, and how happy I should esteem myself to be anyways instrumental in procuring his felicity,

and convincing him that I had his welfare at heart no less than he had mine.

It was not long before Mr. Villars and Mr. Stanley became acquainted, and in a short time their acquaintance grew into the most perfect esteem and solid friendship. Nothing but this circumstance was wanting to make my happiness compleat. His temper and that of Mr. Villars were remarkably alike; chearful, open, and above all disguise. The satisfaction I felt in their intimacy was inexpressible; as, next to my husband, he was, as he had indeed a right to be, the dearest to me of all men upon earth.

He

He would often, by way of pleasantry, insist that having deprived him of the wife he had in view, it was my duty to procure him another. He repeated this so frequently, that I told him one day, partly in jest, partly in earnest, that I could recommend one to him, who, I believed, would make him supremely happy. He took me at my word; and assuming a grave countenance, declared that he relied so firmly on the goodness of my taste, and the sincerity of my wishes for his prosperity, that he would deem it a real kindness to be favoured with the conversation of the lady in question; pledging himself, that if she proved upon acquaintance what I had represented

presented her, he knew of no objection to his receiving her from my hand, at the most precious gift his best friend could bestow.

Finding him serious, I told him, that in order to enable him to form an adequate judgment of the woman whom he was desirous of taking for life, I would invite her to spend the summer with me, together with her aunt, who was a widow lady of a very respectable character, and mistress of a large fortune, which (having never had any children) she intended to leave to this her only niece, who possessed already a very considerable one, being the only child of a wealthy merchant. I promised

misled him at the same time, that I would conceal from both of them the real motive of my invitation; that he might remain at perfect liberty to choose or to decline the offer I laid before him, without their suffering any mortification from their knowledge of the matter.

The lady I had in view was Miss Longmore. To a person formed (I may truly say) by the hands of the Graces, she added a mind full of sense and discretion, and a heart that teemed with good-nature. Though sprightly and entertaining, she weighed all she spoke, and I never heard her say any thing that was offensive. Her countenance was that of a woman of quality;

quality ; affable, serene, and marked with an air of unaffected dignity. Her features were of the most beautiful symmetry, and she answered in every respect the idea of what is meant by a fine woman.

The first moment Mr. Villars beheld her, I perceived with pleasure that I should not probably lose my labour. He was so struck with her, that he told me, by way of compliment, he had never believed any woman, beside myself, could have made the impression upon him at first sight, which he had felt at seeing this lady.

Being however a man of nice observation, he took no small space of
time

time to examine those qualities, which, as he said, would remain when all the others were gone. He used for this purpose every method he could imagine to bring her forward, and to make himself compleatly master of her character.

I took occasion, from the extraordinary circumspection which he manifested in regard of Miss Longmore, to remind him that he had not been so severe in his scrutiny of my qualifications, and had given me much more credit than he seemed inclined to allow to my friend, who was certainly not less deserving than myself.

His

His reply was, that I being his first love, his eyes were wholly those of a lover, and only open to my perfections; which were so many, and so dazzling, that they blinded him to all my blemishes, if I had any: but that being now to recompence himself for the loss of me, he could not be too curious in his second choice, intending, if possible, to make such a one as might prove an exact counterpart of the first.

When he had satisfied himself that the lady I had taken the liberty to recommend to him, was entirely worthy of his attachment, he then applied for my mediation; requesting that

that I would confidentially put the question to her, as from myself, whether he stood a chance of making himself acceptable to her, if his inclinations led him to make the trial.

Miss Longmore, who was perfectly acquainted with his generous behaviour to me, did not hesitate a moment, upon my application to her, to declare, with her usual frankness and festivity of expression, that he was welcome to make the trial as soon as he pleased.

This intelligence filled Mr. Villars with rapture. He confessed that from his first introduction to her, the power of her charms had made him ardently wish

with that her character might correspond with her person. This most essential part he had found upon experiment to be no ways inferior to that which was so enchanting to sight, and was accordingly determined to offer himself to her acceptance.

She received his addresses with that amiable candour which characterized all her actions. She told him, that being above disguise, she would ingenuously acknowledge, that he had long been the peculiar object of her partiality; on account of his noble conduct towards me, and that she esteemed herself happy in his paying her the compliment of an attachment of

of which the value had been so fully proved by the honour and dignity with which I had found it accompanied.

On his apprizing me how graciously his proposals had been accepted, I heartily rejoiced in the success of a gentleman who deserved so much of me, and whom I so zealously desired to see happily and honourably settled. I may justly say at the same time, that such a reception was worthy of such a lover.

After a few months courtship they were united in matrimony. An event that proved one of the most agreeable I had ever wished to see. I had procured a dear friend a companion through

through life, with whom to share affluence and honours, and from whose disposition she had every reason to promise herself the enjoyment of that conjugal happiness, which was my principal end and aim in recommending her to his choice. I had hereby ensured the felicity of a man who once adored me as a lover, and who, though precluded by destiny from becoming my husband, still cherished for me in his heart all the tender feelings of the sublimest friendship.



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